

Week of December 23, 2002: MaineDOT Flash Facts

Topic: Christmas Holiday Safety

Closers: (throughout the week) Many Americans will be on the road this holiday week and MaineDOT reminds you to be a "Road Model" and drive safely.

Flash, the MDOT safety Road Model reminds you "When driving-"Just Drive!"

Facts/Openers for the week:

-About 1000 crashes occur annually in Maine from Christmas Eve through New Year's Day. These crashes result in an average of 4 fatalities and over 350 injuries each year.

In Maine during the past 5 Christmas through New Year's holiday periods:

-There was a total of over 5,000 crashes, 19 fatalities and over 1,800 injuries. Some of the problems on the road during this holiday period were:

- More than 1,500 crashes (about 1/3) occurred when the driver was distracted or inattentive. Nine people died and about another 600 were injured.
- More than 1,100 crashes resulted from excessive or unsafe speed. Nine people died and about another 600 were injured.
- More than 600 crashes with large animals (Deer and Moose) resulting in 20 injuries.
- Nearly 250 crashes involved driving while impaired by alcohol or drugs. 4 people died and another 180 were injured in these crashes.
- More than 70 crashes due to driver being asleep or fatigued resulting in over 30 injuries.

-Many people will be taking long trips to see family and friends. If you are traveling, make sure that you and your vehicle are ready for the trip. If you drink, don't drive!

-Whether you are off skiing for the day or on an extended holiday trip, make sure you travel safely.

Monday:

Tips:

Here's a pre-trip vehicle checklist:

Vehicle:

- Headlights, tail lights, directional signals, and side marker lights all working? (properly operating lights allow you to see and be seen. Also, they need regular cleaning this time of year.)
- Windshield wipers working well? (wiper blades should be periodically replaced)
- Do you have a supply of windshield washer? (It gets used up quickly this time of year)
- Fluids at proper levels? (Oil, coolant, brake fluid, windshield washer)
- How are your tires? (properly inflated, adequate tread-especially considering winter storm season)
- Are brakes functioning properly?
- Any repairs that you have been delaying? Get them done-do not take chances.

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- Have you packed so visibility is clear and luggage and gifts are secure?
Periodically check the tie-downs on any items you are carrying on your roof.
- If you are trailering snowmobiles-check trailer lights; tire conditions; hitch connection; and the securing and balance of load.

Driver:

- Be caught up on your rest before traveling
- Plan your route
- Do not drink

Passengers:

- Pack activities for kids to use in the car
- Everyone needs to buckle up
- Let the driver drive

Wednesday:

The real key to crash prevention is safe driving behavior. Here are some reminders to keep you safe on the road:

- Be rested before taking the wheel.
- Driving is a full time task. Don't let distractions take your eyes or your mind from what is happening on the roadway. (or alternate reading--Make sure your mind is focused on driving, and not drifting to all the other things on your holiday agenda.) *(Flash Fact: -More than 1,500 crashes occurred when the driver was distracted or inattentive. Nine people died and about another 600 were injured.)*
- Maintain safe speeds. *(More than 1,100 crashes resulted from excessive or unsafe speed. Nine people died and about another 600 were injured.)*
- Slow down if stormy or roads are wet.
- Be ready to safely react to problems on the road or the actions of other drivers.
- Make sure the driver of your vehicle is sober.
- Make sure everyone buckles up.
- Maintain a safe distance from the vehicle in front of you. (leave an additional following distance if roads are wet or snow covered - 4 to 5 seconds)
- Keep current on weather reports (conditions can change quickly this time of year)
- Allow extra time for holiday traffic
- Take regular rest breaks.
- Stay calm, and enjoy the ride!

Friday:

Tips:

When you are out traveling this holiday week, remember:

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- Expect holiday traffic delays. (Leave yourself extra travel time - Don't let delays get the better of your emotions.) (If you leave late, expect to arrive late.)
 - Check your local weather and predicted conditions along your route before you leave. Temperatures can shift dramatically in a short period of time and conditions will vary throughout the state.
 - Kids may have gotten some exciting gifts this year-bikes, scooters, skis, snow boards or skateboards. They may be testing them out, so be on the lookout!
 - Colder temperatures at night and early in the morning can make a big difference in road conditions. Watch road surfaces for slick conditions, such as black ice.
 - Watch for moose and deer.
- Enjoy your trip!